

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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1. The church still exists in Lithuania, but only to give the impression that there is "freedom of worship". Its field of activity is gradually diminishing, and can only get smaller because the number of priests is decreasing and their field of action is becoming more limited.
2. Since attendance at church services is not forbidden, ordinary people do not notice the changes which have taken place, and the declining position of the church is not noticed so much as are the national or economic questions.

Priests

3. The priests may carry out only passive duties towards their congregations; they may perform marriages and funeral services and hear confessions. They are not allowed to work actively (e.g., to prepare children for first communion), and religious funeral processions are allowed only in the side streets. The higher hierarchy of the church has, for all practical purposes, been liquidated.

Closing of Churches

4. Many churches have been closed; but, in the majority of cases, particularly in the remote parts of the country, this was because of the lack of priests. There was nothing to indicate that the churches were closed according to some pre-arranged plan; indeed, the opposite was the case. For some churches, priests were sought in an effort to prevent closure. (This was perhaps to belie the unpleasant reports in the West that the Soviets were closing all churches.)

Attitude of the Public towards Religion

5. It seems that at present the Soviets do not consider that the church offers any danger to them, for religion will die with the older generation. The people who are middle-aged are mostly indifferent towards religion (they are

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exhausted by other problems), and the younger generation is mostly growing up without religion.

Anti-religious Activities

6. Religion is not taught in the schools; everywhere in public life young people see an anti-religious attitude. Church holidays are not kept (indeed, on such holidays anti-religious lectures are often arranged). The schools forbid parents to influence their children towards religion. Thus, religious life is being gradually extinguished, so that it is thought the Soviets are unlikely to take active steps to liquidate the church.

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